

Editorial

I recently watched the movie, “The Legend of Bagger Vance.” The young boy who served as the narrator talked about the game of golf, the beauty of the game, and the joy of being on a course. There is no offensive team, no defensive team—just you, the course, and the ball. Solitary.

That solitude offers advantages and poses problems. During a philosophy-of-sport class I once took, we debated the issues fair play and sportsmanship. How do you attain them? In most sports, officials oversee play and determine infractions to the rules. When a player pushes, trips or hits an opponent, the official blows the whistle, calls a foul and assesses the penalty. If the referee doesn’t see the infraction, is it a foul? Players who compete at a high level know what they can “get away with” and what they can’t. If the official doesn’t call it, it never happened. The players play and the referees officiate.

Golf is different. The game is played to a different standard. Players are expected to impose penalties on themselves. Inherent in the game is a code of ethics that insists players police themselves. It’s part of the game—a part of its fabric. Players—whether professionals or recreational—are expected to enforce the rules and record their correct scores. Sometimes an official may be present to interpret and assist, but the onus still is on the player. If a golfer can’t find his ball, he will, on his own volition, take out another ball and assesses the penalty.

In “Bagger Vance,” Rannulph Junuh calls a penalty on himself. Junuh’s playing partners and the young boy look on as he explains how his ball had moved. He accidentally had moved it. It’s a self-imposed penalty, whether the opponent saw the infraction or not. The game expects and demands it.

Now, back to centerline. Aviators are supposed to play by the rules. Do they? Training flights have an instructor overseeing the evolution. Checkride evaluators watch every move. But, the vast majority of flights aren’t monitored. Who notes the infraction, who imposes the penalty? If something goes wrong, who makes the call? Naval aviators. You return from an eventful flight, give a full debrief, and disclose all.

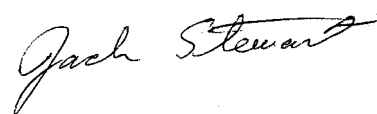
Disclosing all and the willingness to share it: That’s what makes this magazine valuable in the aviation-safety arena. Those involved in naval aviation see the logic in making the score accurate. A false score in golf is just that—false. Naval aviators view problems in flight, mechanical or human, as items that need to be disclosed and shared. That’s where the contributors to *Approach* come in.

You share your mistakes and your experiences, good or bad. By doing so, you not only provide an interesting “There I was” story, but you help to make sure the finest in our country don’t duplicate your harrowing experience.

Just as a golfer calls it the way it is, you write it the same way. It’s a matter of integrity. As they say in golf, it’s “for the good of the game.”

What you do is not a game, but when you contribute an article, it’s definitely “for the good.” The articles submitted to *Approach* tell great stories. Continue to share for the benefit of all who fly.

There’s more, but I have a tee time.



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